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11

FROM THE STATE OF URARTU TO THE FORMATION OF THE ARMENIAN KINGDOM

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Among all the disputable issues in the history of Armenia, the formation of the ancient kingdom is one of the most controversial. Evidence of its existence can be found in the works of the Greek historian Xenophon (5th century BC) and the Armenian historian Moses of Choren (5th century AD).[1] The idea proposed by Moses of Choren that the Armenians originated in the Armenian Highland (hereafter AH) and were the descendants of a forefather named Hayk has been countered by an alternative hypothesis that the Armenians migrated to AH from the west. This hypothesis is based partly on the information provided by the Greek historians Herodotus (VII.73.1) and Strabo (XI.14.12), the former stating that the Armenians were immigrants from Phrygia and the latter claiming that the name of Armenia was derived from Armen of Armenium in Thessaly, one of the Argonauts whose followers settled in this region.[2] A later date in the sixth century BC has been proposed because the first certain mention of a country of Armenia is found in the Bisutun inscription dated to c. 520 BC (DB 26-30). Despite criticisms, a western origin for the Armenians in the sixth century BC is the dominant theory in recent western historical scholarship,[3] while Armenian scholars in general follow the views advocated by Moses of Choren. In this paper the evidence in favour of an autochthonous origin for the Armenians will be presented.

First it must be admitted that the available evidence is not sufficient to answer this question definitively. The opinions expressed in the works of Herodotus and Strabo were not based on rigorous analysis of the sources and Moses of Choren's history too is a hotchpotch of myth, legend, poetry, and oral traditions combined with a cavalier use of ancient historical writers such as Eusebius and Josephus. Secondly the way that the available evidence has been interpreted is dependent on the preconceptions of the modern scholar. Thus some scholars stress the similarities between Urartian material culture and that of the subsequent Armenian kingdom and interpret this to mean that the Armenian culture was derived from Urartian. Others stress the differences and conclude that the Armenian kingdom owed little to the earlier Urartian state.

Most linguists consider Armenian to be an independent language within the Indo-European family. It has similarities with Greek, Thracian, and Phrygian, but it is disputed whether these similarities are due to a common origin or due to prolonged regional contact (Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1984, 1995; Clackson 1994). The differences between these various languages are such that it is clear that they developed separately long before the sixth century BC.

Some recent investigations of Phrygian language and culture assume that Phrygians were present in Asia Minor in the middle of the second millennium B.C.[4] Herodotus' statement that the Armenians were related to the Phrygians of Asia Minor may refer to this period. Strabo's version that Armenians derive from Armen, a participant in the Argonaut campaign, also points to the pre-Trojan War historical period. The presence of the names of Cadmus and Mopsos in the 3rd century BC poem Argonautica by Appollonius of Rhodes has also been cited to support this point of view.[5]

[1] The king of Armenia and his son Tigranes played a prominent role in Xenophon's Cyropaedia, III.i.1, etc.; Moses of Choren. History of Armenia I.24-31. For a detailed discussion of Moses of Choren's History of Armenia see Thomson 1978.

[2] An attempt to explain how those concepts formed in ancient times was published by Paul Bernard (1997).

[3] For example, Grousset 1995: 73, Hovannisian (ed.) 1997, Hewsen 2001.

[4] Moiseeva 1984: 12-16, Bajun & Orlov 1988: 165-167.

[5] D'jakonov 1983b: 169, Ter-Martirosov 1995: 18-21.

As a rule, Armenian scholars follow the thesis that Armenian culture developed within the AH from ancient times till today. Trustworthiness of this approach is supported by the demonstrable continuity in material culture. The mechanism of the establishment of the Armenian Kingdom, however, remains hard to define. The issue gets even more complicated by the problem of the cultural succession from Urartu to Armenia.

Aspects of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled in Urartu may be seen in material culture. The finest Urartian pottery has a polished red or brown slipped surface. This has been interpreted as characteristic of the official assemblage of the Urartian state. The red slip may be connected with the worship of Haldi. The absence of surface ornamentation may be interpreted as an attempt by the rulers to create a pottery style that transcended tribal or ethnic boundaries, if decoration is considered to be an indicator of ethnic identity.

Urartian pottery was sometimes impressed with stamp seals that often depicted animals or imaginary creatures They do not identify the potters, but could be zoomorphic images of the gods (Ter-Martirosov 2004: 290). All the stamps on the red-polished pottery were placed on the lower part of the vessels (Colour plate IIb). This position emphasized the subordinate position of other gods in comparison to the god Haldi. Examining the forms of ceramics made in the state workshops, the connection with local ceramics is clearly visible. At the same time, the influence of Urartian ceramic forms on local ones can be traced (Martirosjan 1961: 51, 102; Ter-Martirosov 1984: 18). Presumably the craftsmen, resettled into the fortress, made familiar forms. The products of the state workshops designed for the palace were imitated by the craftsmen of the subdued lands. During the excavations in Teishebaini (Martirosjan 1961: 51, 102), Horom (Badaljan, Kohl, Stronach et al. 1994: 9), and Erebuni (Ter-Martirosov 2005a: 147-153; Ter-Martirosov 2007-08: 54-67 no. 321) it became evident, that along with the production of state workshops, pottery with shapes typical of the pre-Urartian Early Iron Age were also found.

The coexistence of heavy iron arrow-heads for long bows and smaller socketed bronze arrow-heads and the presence of long straight swords and curved swords and daggers might have been because there were several different contingents in the Urartian army. The difference between the culture of the local population and that of the official Urartian élite can be seen in the necropoles of rural settlements. In these materials, the survival of pre-Urartian traditions is clearly visible (Martirosjan 1964: 263-293; Esajan 1976: 44-98). It is possible that these differences reflect different elements of the population of the Urartian state, on the one hand the ruling Urartian élite and on the other the subjugated populations including both local inhabitants and deported groups. This division could have led to antagonism towards their overlords and the identification of the subject population collectively (as non-Urartian) rather than as various different ethnicities (Kubbel 1982: 134). The policy of tribal resettlement pursued by Urartu kings brought homogeneity and the disappearance of local ethnic differences, thus forming a common culture, opposed to the official one. It is possible that a substantial number of these subjugated people were Armenians. The Armenian language, differing from Urartian (Džaukjan 1987: 47 etc.) and probably also from Etiunian (D'jakonov 1983b: 18), might according to this scenario have acted to unite rather than to divide the subject peoples. The adoption of the Armenian language might have supported the consolidation of a new Armenian community into a single nation throughout Urartian territory.

The Urartian royal ideology including the use of cuneiform script for royal inscriptions might then have been rejected by the majority of the population. Development of ethnic self-consciousness could have become irreversible in the second half of the seventh century B.C. Many researchers include the territories of Bardzr Hayq (Upper Armenia the region round Erzincan) in the nuclear region of the Armenian ethnos, inhabited by western Armenian tribes. Moses of Choren (1,31), however, did not mention the territories of Bardzr Hayq in the 'genealogical gazetteer' of Hayk: these lands may have been conquered by the Urartians in the time of Argishti son of Rusa (c. 700 BC) as inscriptions of this ruler have been found at Altintepe. The core of the Armenian nation as recorded by Moses of Choren may have been created and fixed in historical tradition before the reign of Argishti, preserving the names of the lands and tribes, ethnonyms as descendants of Hayk, the founder of the Armenian nation. Thus, Urartu could have been the very place and time of the formation of Armenian nation.

The archaeological materials that belong to the seventh century BC are of particular interest. Recent archaeological research at Arinberd has clarified the stratigraphy of the cultural layers of the monument. A pre-Urartian layer, belonging to the Early Iron Age, three cultural layers of the Urartian period and a layer

with several stages of construction, belonging to the Achaemenid period, have been identified (Fig. 11.01). Wall paintings of the Achaemenid period have been recognized (Ter-Martirosov 2005b) (Fig. 11.02). Besides ceramics and two bronze arrows, fragments of two clay bullae, with the remains of impressions were discovered in the Achaemenid layer (Ter-Martirosov 2001a: 155-163; 2005a: 147-153; 2007-08: 54-67 no. 321).

Fig. 11.01. Arinberd. North slope. Below – a wall of the late Urartian period. Above – a part of a wall of the Achemenian period.

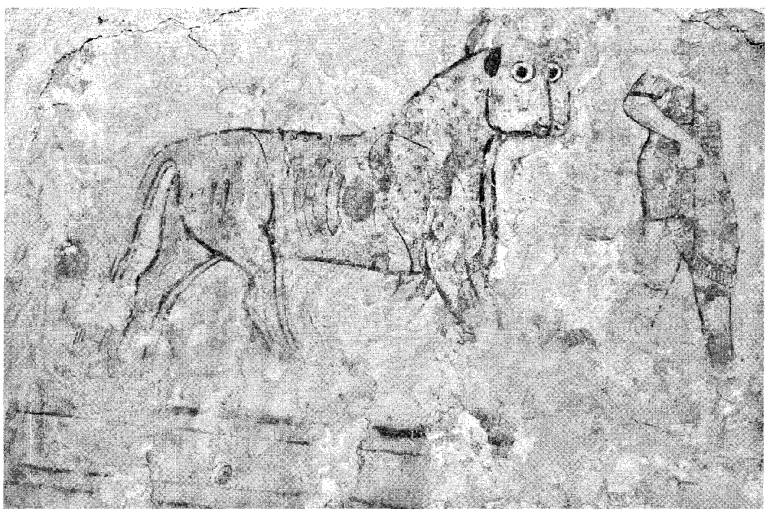

Fig. 11.02. Arinberd wall painting of the Achemenid period.

In 2001-2006 an artists' workshop was found in the second Urartian layer on the northern slope in which there were the remains of a blue pigment, ochre, chalk and a store of loess sand. The same layer contained interesting samples of ceramics with incised images and a fragment of a stone with hieroglyphic signs of volume. Here, the most significant discovery was a clay bulla with impressions of a round stamp seal depicting a god with a beard and a dentate crown. He is sitting at a table with a crescent over it. A wand is depicted behind the god (Fig. 11.03). The use of the monument was brought to an end by military operations, as evidenced by a thick layer of ash and burnt clay. The head of a bifoliate iron arrow was found in this layer. In the third (later) layer of the Urartian period, probably dating to the middle of the 7th century B.C., a new fortress wall of big stone blocks was constructed. It was located 40 m from the newly restored walls and 18 m below their foundation. The wall has buttresses and has been followed a distance of 15 m. The height of the preserved part of the stone foundation is 210 cm on the outside and 300 cm on the inside. The stones are laid on clay mortar. The spaces between the big blocks are filled with small pieces of tufa. The top of the wall was covered with a thick layer of rammed clay 20 cm thick, indicating that the upper part of the wall was made of mud-bricks. Today we can suppose that the upper Urartian complex was the citadel built after attacks on the fortress. The layer was full of high quality red-polished and black pottery sherds some of which bore stamp-seal impressions (Colour plate IIc). The stamps on the black ceramics are placed on the upper part of the vessels. Since the black polished ceramics are typical of the local ceramics of the 7th century BC, it is possible that these vessels were dedicated not to Haldi, but to local gods.

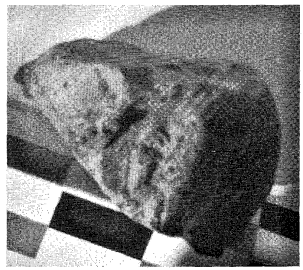

Fig. 11.03. Arinberd seal impression of the Urartian period.

In the 7th century BC near the citadels of Urartian cities residential quarters were constructed. The excavations in 1998 and 2007 on the small hill in Arinberd uncovered a city block outside the fortress walls established in the middle of the 7th century BC and people living there were quite prosperous. They used decorated black pottery typical of the Iron Age (Ter-Martirosov 1998a). The residential neighborhood outside Karmir-Blur is also dated to the 7th century BC (Piotrovskij 1970). This suggests that an increasingly important role was played by the local population in 7th century BC Urartu. This may have stimulated the extension of the Urartian state and new conquests during the reign of Rusa son of Argishti.

It is possible that in the second half of the 7th century BC in a period when the Urartian state was weakening, the leaders of an increasingly powerful Armenian population group tried to seize political power and to take over the existing state machinery. One of the Urartian kings named Rusa has a father named Erimena: this name is different in form to the traditional names of the Urartian kings.[6] Thus it has been suggested that he was an Armenian, the uncle or brother of king Sarduri, the last Urartian ruler mentioned in Assyrian sources

[6] For discussions of the date of Rusa son of Erimena see Salvini, Fuchs, Seidl, Kroll and Roaf in this volume (Chapters 08, 09, 12, 13, 14). Fuchs this volume Chapter 09 suggests the name of the 9th century BC ruler of Urartu Aramu might be identical with that of Erimena. If the similarity between the names and Armenia is not coincidental, this is a powerful argument for the early dating of the presence of Armenians in this region.

(Arutjunjan 1970: 332, n. 94). Erimena could have been a priest, and his name may be reflected in the name of Erouand.[7] Two hundred years of a strong administrative system and political and cultural traditions could not be easily changed by the appearance of an alien ruler. It could be the reason why Erimena's son was given a traditional Urartian name Rusa. The last Urartian kings are mentioned only as initiators to construct a number of small buildings (Arutjunjan 1970: 115-116). Urartu is also mentioned in 593 year B.C. in the Biblical Book of Jeremiah (51, 27-28; D'jakonov 1968: 176-180; Diakonoff 1984).[8] The fall of the Scythian kingdom to the south of the Armenian Highland and the retreat of Scythian military detachment through territories of weakened Urartu-Biainili played a decisive role in the destruction of the Urartian administrative centers (Piotrovskij 1970: 240, 256). The destruction of towns could also have been caused by Scythian troops, who were earlier a part of the urban garrisons and later deserted to the side of their compatriots (Ter-Martirosov 1994: 81-82).

It has often been assumed that the date of the fall of the Urartian state (c. 590 year BC) (D'jakonov 1951c: 38)[9] marked the beginning of the Armenian kingdom. The Armenian nation, formed in the depths of Urartu, preserved the integrity of the Urartian state. Former frontiers were preserved (Ter-Martirosov 1998b; Tiracjan 1981: 68-84). Its population included several communities: Armenian (the dominant part of the population), Urartian (the minority of the ruling nobility), and several others, such as Chaldians and Scythians, who were subsequently assimilated into the Armenian ethnos. The processes of formation of the Armenian kingdom and of the political formation of the core of Armenian ethnos were not completed until the second century BC (Krkjašarjan 1970: 90). The social and economic structure of Urartu, based on the exploitation of one tribal union by another, could not be the social basis for the Armenian state, which instead fostered the process of consolidation of all the ethnic groups, those from the highlands as well as the Urartians, into a united Armenian ethnos. That is why Urartian citadel fortresses towns, the supporting constituent of state structure of Urartu, could not be the basis for the economy and culture of the subsequent Armenian kingdom. With the fall of Urartu the typical elements of its culture, including the Urartian script disappeared. Those elements of material culture that reflect the social structure of the newly emerging society (architectural planning of new prestigious buildings, fine arts, etc.) show no connection with the earlier Urartian traditions. A number of gods, however, appear in both the Urartian and Armenian pantheons (Amajakjan 1990: 84-85). The formation of Armenian nationality in the core of the Urartian state in the 6th century BC defined the image and form of its subsequent political institutions, economic structure, and cultural and normative traditions.

The formation of the Armenian kingdom caused a shift to a territorial state. Small rural settlements created a new culture, which fused together the cultural achievements of the Urartian and non-Urartian populations of the state. Agriculture on irrigated lands and pastoral animal husbandry continued, but the scale of handicraft production diminished. The changes in the exploitation system and in the redistribution of wealth led to the decay and devastation of the Urartian centres, which had served as the base for economic exploitation. The fall of urban life in the country should be dated to this same period in the sixth century BC. The citadels became the residences of rulers and local nobility. Destruction of the irrigation systems does not seem to have taken place, because no changes were undertaken in the cultural-economic system of village settlements and those canals have continued to function till today. Private and state lands of Urartian kings became the property of Armenian kings, proved by the coincidence of territories of most Urartian towns with the territories of the Armenian kings. Rural settlements became the main social and economic unit of the state and the head of the village community was at the same time an agent of the state administrative machinery. Presumably the priesthood retained their positions, though we have no materials connected with that period. Former fighting squads, forming regular military detachments in the Urartian period, kept their status in the Armenian kingdom (Ter-Martirosov 2001c: 241). Curved swords and daggers still appear in the archaeological material of this time (Esajan 1976: 220) (Fig. 11.04).

[7] Erouand was the predecessor of Tigran king of Armenia according to Moses of Choren. Tigran is normally identified with the king of Armenia who was a contemporary of Cyrus king of Persia (c. 559-530 BC).

[8] For further discussion see Marinković this volume Chapter 15.

[9] For further discussion of the dating of the fall of Urartu see Hellwag this volume Chapter 16.

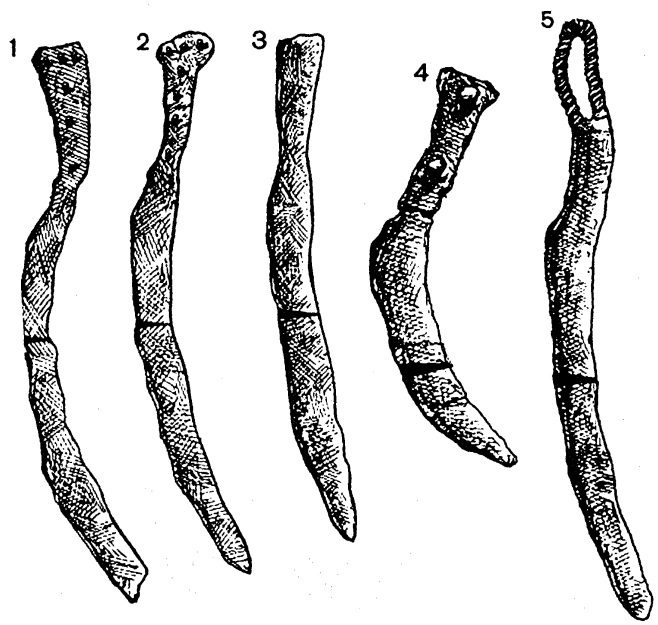

Fig. 11.04. Swords of the 7th to 6th centuries BC.

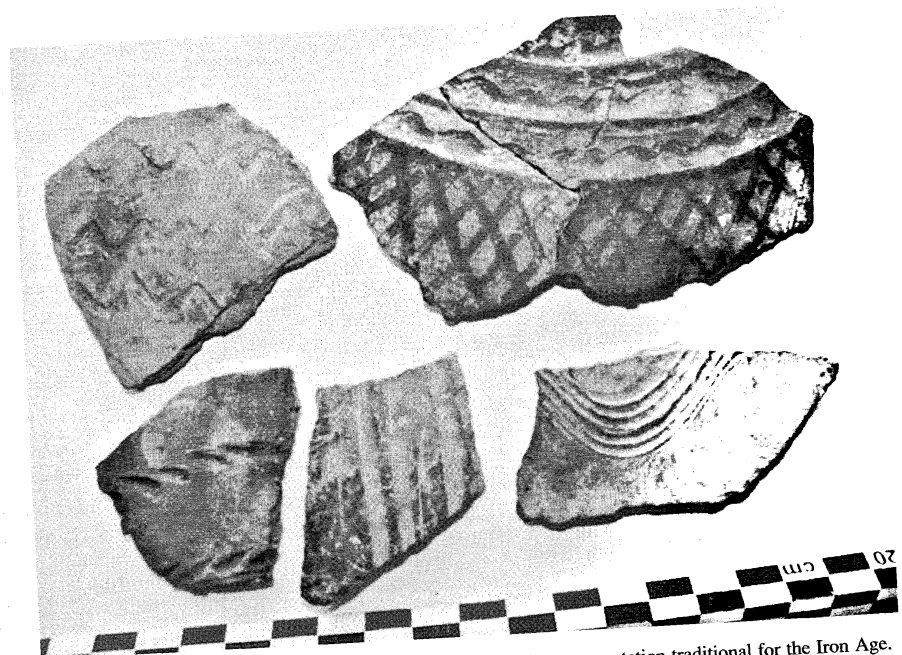

Fig. 11.05. 5th to 4th century BC pottery from Beniamin with ornamentation traditional for the Iron Age.

The archaeological assemblages of Urartu and Armenia manifest many differences. The traditional way of life is the same, as well as, the forms of household and most traditions in every day culture. A vivid example of this is the survival of fine metalworking traditions of Urartu (Tiracjan 1988: 57). The survival into the post-Urartian period of objects typical of the Urartian period has handicapped the identification and dating of archaeological layers of the early period of the Armenian state. Appeal to the pre-Urartian traditional culture caused a return to archaic iconography in the art of Armenia. As shown by the excavation of Beniamin and Arinberd, as late as the fifth century BC black ceramics of traditional shapes with ornamentation characteristic of the Early Iron Age were still in use (Fig. 11.05). At the same time in the territory of ancient Urartu ceramics with a red surface and with shapes close to the Urartian ceramics continued to be made (Fig. 11.06). Difference is the absence of a shiny polished slip and the occurrence of more darker or paler coloured rims of the vessels. It is possible that here there is influence of Early Iron Age ceramics, in which there was a similar treatment of the vessel rims. The Achaemenid conquest of the region led to the introduction of new forms of representative ceramics. In the second Armenian kingdom in the fourth century BC the pottery is uniform in archaeological sites for all the various regions.

Fig. 11.06a. 5th century BC pottery from Arinberd with red painted surface.

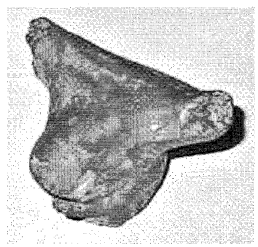

Fig. 11.06b. The protome of a red 5th century BC vessel from Beniamin.

In contrast to the official art of Urartu, where human and animal figures were depicted in profile, Armenian arts employed frontal images (Ter-Martirosov 1996). Religious bronze plaques (second half of the seventh to the beginning of the sixth century BC from Giyimli with frontal images of gods (Vanden Berghe & de Meyer 1982: Pls. 125-127) can be considered the first images of Armenian gods (Ter-Martirossian 1995: 55). Originating in small agricultural settlements early Armenian culture, conforming to ancient pre-Urartian ideals and rejecting many achievements of official Urartian culture, looks more archaic.

In the memory of the Armenian population all deeds of Urartian kings were ascribed to the Assyrian queen Shamiram (Semiramis), the enemy of the Armenian king Ara the Beautiful (Ter-Martirosov 1995: 43-62). Such a compression of historical events and their assignment to ancient heroes or gods are typical of

national folklore of the ancient period. Thus, for example, Ctesias reduced the history of ancient Assyria to the activities of only of four rulers.

In sum, linguistic evidence and Armenian traditions may be taken to demonstrate that the proto-Armenians were already in the AH when the Urartian state imposed a political unity on the land. While the various institutions imposed by the Urartians, such as their state religion, did much to eliminate previous tribal differences, antagonism to this elite culture had the effect of assimilating the various conquered peoples, some of whom had been moved about within the state, into a unified opposition in which Armenian was the dominant element. When the Urartian state was stripped away, this new unity became the basis for the rise of a kingdom of Armenia, selecting some elements of the Urartian past for preservation and memory, while rejecting others. Historical memory and the material culture of Armenia in the sixth century BC show connections with the culture of previous centuries and therefore demonstrate the falseness of the theory that the Armenians migrated to the territories of former Urartu in about 600 BC.

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Abbreviations

AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AHw	W. von Soden 1965-1981. *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Wiesbaden
AMI	*Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*
AMIT	*Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan*
BAR IS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
CAD	A.L. Oppenheim & E. Reiner (eds.) 1956-. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Chicago-Glückstadt
CTN 5	H.W.F. Saggs 2001. *The Nimrud Letters, 1952*, Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud V, British School of Archaeology in Iraq, London
CTU	M. Salvini 2008. *Corpus dei testi urartei* Vols. 1-3. *Le iscrizioni su pietra e roccia*, Documenta Asiana 8, Rome
HchI	F.W. König 1955-1957. *Handbuch der chaldischen Inschriften*, AfO Beiheft 8, Graz
IFŽ	*Istoriko-filologičeskij Žurnal [Historical-Philological Journal] Patma-Banasirakan Handes*, Yerevan
I.N.	*Ivories from Nimrud*
IstMitt	*Istanbuler Mitteilungen*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
PNA	*The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAA 1	S. Parpola 1987. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I. Letters from Assyria and the West*, SAA 1, Helsinki
SAA 4	I. Starr 1990. *Queries to the Sun God: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*, SAA 4, Helsinki
SAA 5	G.B. Lanfranchi & S. Parpola 1990. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II. Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces*, SAA 5, Helsinki
SAA 7	F.M. Fales & J.N. Postgate 1992. *Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration*, SAA 7, Helsinki
SAA 11	F.M. Fales & J.N. Postgate 1995. *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration*, SAA 11, Helsinki
SAA 15	A. Fuchs & S. Parpola 2001. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III. Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces*, SAA 15, Helsinki
SAA 16	M. Luukko & G. Van Buylaere 2002. *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*, SAA 16, Helsinki
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies

Sg 8 Sargon's Letter to the God Ashur. For the text see W. Mayer 1983. Sargons Feldzug gegen Urartu – 714 v. Chr., Text und Übersetzung, *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 115: 65-132

SMEA *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*

UKN Nos 1–370: G.A. Melikishvili 1960. *Urartskie Klinoobraznye Nadpisi [Urartian cuneiform inscriptions]*, Moscow. Nos. 371-533: G.A. Melikishvili 1971. Urartskie klinoobraznye nadpisi II. Otkrytija i Publikacii 1959-1970 gg. [Urartian cuneiform inscriptions II. Discoveries and publications 1959-1970], *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* 1971: 229-255; 267-293

UPD I.M. D'jakonov, 1963. *Urartskie pis'ma i dokumenty* [*Urartian letters and documents*], Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moskva - Leningrad

VDI *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii [Messenger of Ancient History]*

ZA *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*

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